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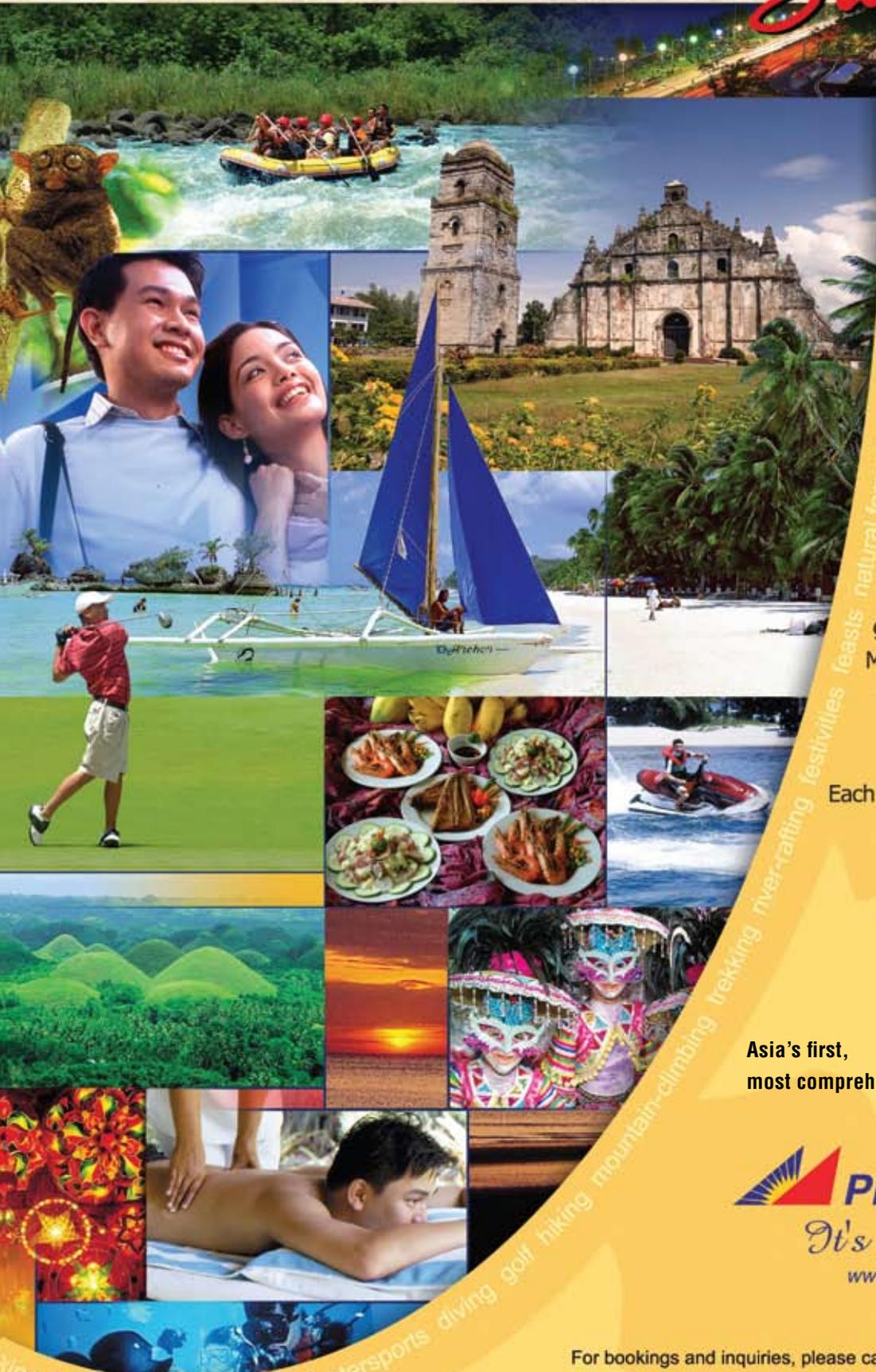
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features

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EDITOR'S NOTE



“This year, the Philippines and Singapore will commemorate the 40th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between the two countries. The Philippines and Singapore have a lot in common, apart from cooperation in the political realm; the relations are all built on very strong people-to-people understanding and common cultural factors.”

Mabuhay!

Welcome to this exciting, brand new issue of Partner Philippines.

As we approach the 111th anniversary of Philippines' independence from colonial rule, we pause to gauge the country's progress. This year is significant not just for the Philippines, but also to Singapore, and to Philippine-Singapore relations. This year, the Philippines and Singapore will commemorate the 40th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between the two countries. The Philippines and Singapore have a lot in common, apart from cooperation in the political realm; the relations are all built on very strong people-to-people understanding and common cultural factors.

Take a trip down memory lane in our photo-feature on Philippine-Singapore relations, titled 'Making History Together'. Also, the grand celebration of reaching this milestone will be seen in the form of a three-day weekend fiesta at Plaza Singapura, titled 'The Philippine Country Fair: Fiesta Philippines Live Your Dreams'. The entire weekend will be filled to the brim with entertainment, community bonding, realty and legal advice, public presentations and lucky draws. Make sure you do not miss it.

This is a tumultuous period in the world, with the global economy still reeling from the sub-

prime hits it suffered late last year. How has the Philippines weathered the storm? We present views from experts, as well as statements from President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo and Philippine Central Bank Governor Amando M. Tetangco, Jr. The good news seems to be that the economic jolt has revealed the inner strength of the Philippine economy, as well as the benefits of strong overseas remittances and an educated and skilled workforce.

Looking to improve the conditions of disadvantaged Filipinos are the non-governmental, non-profit organisation, Kawad Galinga, and the Bayanihan Society. Read about their efforts and the spill-over effects in society.

This issue also takes a look at the mall culture in Manila, in particular, which is home to some of the most breathtaking malls in the world. Speaking of breathtaking, we also take a peek into some of the most stunning tourist destinations in the Philippines, in 'Find Your Piece of Paradise'. If you're planning a vacation to escape from it all, be warned: This article could make your choices much tougher!

We hope you have as much pleasure in reading this edition of Partner Philippines as we have had creating it.

NOMITA DHAR

Editor-in-chief



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From the Ambassador

PHILIPPINES AND SINGAPORE:

FORTY YEARS OF FRIENDSHIP AND PARTNERSHIP

I am pleased to present the fifth edition of Partner Philippines, the Embassy's publication on trade and investment opportunities in the Philippines. This year, as we celebrate the 111th anniversary of the declaration of Philippine independence, we are also commemorating another important event - the 40th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between the Philippines and Singapore.

The Philippines and Singapore established full diplomatic relations in 1969. Since then, both countries have worked to forge a close partnership that has developed in depth and breadth over the past four decades.

Having been previously posted in Singapore as Minister and Consul General, it has been my distinct pleasure to personally witness the strengthening of ties over the years. Singapore is one of the top trading partners of the Philippines worldwide, and its top trading partner in ASEAN, with a trade volume that reached over US\$8 billion in 2008.

Tourism exchanges between the two countries, as well, remains brisk. Singapore is one of the top ten source markets for tourists to the Philippines, with air traffic between the two countries growing 12% in 2008. This year, with the successful signing of an air agreement, more low-cost flights between the Philippines and Singapore will allow tourism exchanges to grow.

Now, more than ever, is a good time to visit the Philippines and explore the many opportunities that are available. The Philippine economy, bolstered by the strong economic policies implemented by President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo, has remained least affected by the current global economic crisis, leading the chair of the International Chamber of Commerce, Dr. Victor Fung, to declare the Philippines "one of the brightest spots in the region".

Amidst the economic downturn, the Philippines remains one of the better-performing economies, having managed a 6.4% GNP growth for the 4th quarter of 2008. The Philippine government has been proactive in putting in place programs and stimulus packages to enhance our economic performance, as well as safety nets and training programs that will equip our overseas workers to adjust to the changing demands of the global market.

In the global economy, the Philippines is known for being a business process outsourcing (BPO) hub. Despite the recession, our BPO industry is poised to grow at double-digit rates, and is projected to generate one out of all ten jobs created in the Philippines over the next three to four years. Business opportunities in the Philippines are made even more attractive by their proximity to recreational and tourist attractions. The Philippines is known for its beautiful beach getaways, but in this issue we focus on the retail scene in Manila, our capital city and one of the bustling business hubs of the country.

I invite you to take a closer look at the Philippines and, through the articles in this edition, get a glimpse of what our country has to offer.

Mabuhay!

MINDA C. CRUZ

Ambassador
Singapore, 12 June 2009



H.E. MINDA C. CRUZ
Philippine Ambassador to Singapore

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From the Secretary of Foreign Affairs

“As we mark the 111th Anniversary of Philippine Independence and the 40th anniversary of Philippines-Singapore diplomatic relations, I am eager to see the development of an even stronger and more active Philippines-Singapore partnership.”

On the occasion of the 111th Anniversary of the Declaration of Philippine Independence, I am pleased to extend my warmest greetings to the readers of Partner Philippines.

This year's celebration is doubly significant for it coincides with the 40th anniversary of the establishment of the Philippines' diplomatic relations with an important partner, Singapore.

People-to-people relations between the two countries predate by far the official establishment of diplomatic relations, Jose Rizal, the Philippines' national hero, wrote about his visits to Singapore as early as 1882. Rizal's affinity for Singapore was formally recognized last year, when Singapore President S.R. Nathan unveiled the Jose Rizal marker on the Asian Civilizations Museum Green, as part of the National Heritage Board's "Friends to Our Shores" program.

Philippines-Singapore relations remain vibrant, characterized by a friendly and fruitful partnership that has contributed to the development of our two countries. Trade and tourism exchanges, which fuel our economies and foster our peoples' exchanges and cultural awareness, have expanded over the

years. Cooperation continues to grow even in the midst of global recession.

I am pleased to note the continued evolution of the human aspect of our bilateral relations. As a multi-cultural and multi-ethnic country, Singapore has been more than welcoming to the thriving Filipino community that has formed there over the years.

The Bayanihan Centre in Pasir Panjang, which is run by a group of civic-minded Filipinos and Singaporeans, is concrete evidence of the dynamic relationship between our peoples.

As we mark the 111th Anniversary of Philippine Independence and the 40th anniversary of Philippines-Singapore diplomatic relations, I am eager to see the development of an even stronger and more active Philippines-Singapore partnership.

With the milestone achievements of the past years as anchor, I am confident that our shared commitment and common aspirations will propel Philippines-Singapore ties to new heights in the years to come.

ALBERTO G. ROMULO

Secretary of Foreign Affairs
12 June 2009



ALBERTO G. ROMULO
Secretary of Foreign Affairs

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From the Secretary of Trade and Industry

*“On behalf of the Department of Trade and Industry, I convey my warmest greetings and sincerest congratulations to the Philippine Embassy in Singapore on the publication of the fourth edition of **Partner Philippines** in celebration of the 111th Anniversary of Philippine Independence.”*

The occasion is made more significant with the celebration of 40th anniversary of the establishment of Philippines-Singapore Bilateral Relations. Over those forty years, the mutually beneficial relations between the two countries have strengthened to form an impregnable bridge of friendship.

The Philippine economy remains resilient in the face of the global financial crisis. The Philippines' young and economically active population has propelled economic growth even in difficult times. The country's export industry, remittances and outsourcing sectors, while exposed to more difficult global conditions, possess competitive elements that make them less vulnerable to the worldwide economic down cycle.

In addition to this economic resilience, we are gearing ourselves for more growth by opening up new opportunities in the Renewable Energy and Tourism sectors. These two sectors present development prospects in areas where our partners in Singapore already have great expertise.

As we mark 111 years of independence, and 40 years of Philippines-Singapore bilateral relations, we look forward to facing the challenges of today standing side by side with Singapore.

Mabuhay!

PETER B. FAVILA
Secretary of Trade and Industry



PETER B. FAVILA
Secretary of Trade and Industry

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MESSAGE

From the Secretary of Tourism



JOSEPH H. DURANO
Secretary of Tourism

The annual celebration of the Declaration of Philippine Independence has always been a moving and major commemoration for Filipinos all over the world. It is a day dedicated to our heroes, our great forefathers who courageously regained freedom and independence from foreign rule.

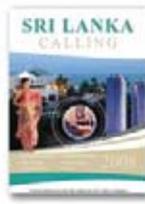
Today, we also honor our modern day heroes, the Overseas Filipino Workers (OFWs) who remain steadfast in excelling in various fields of endeavor to gain better opportunities for their families and for the greater service of our fellow Filipinos.

They are a significant part of the global workforce and we are very proud of their role as envoys of goodwill and tourism frontliners showcasing the warmth of our people and the beauty of our country.

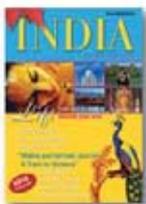
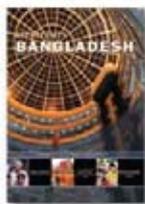
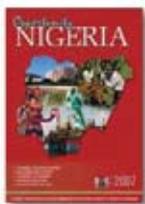
To all our countrymen residing in Singapore, we are one with you and we trust that this gathering will rekindle Filipino pride and optimism in our hearts.

Mabuhay!

JOSEPH 'ACE' DURANO
Secretary



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Weathering The Storm



Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo, President of Philippines

“There is indeed a global economic crisis, but fortunately, through a mix of careful planning, congressional economic reforms and the hard work of many people, including Congress, we were able to prevent the global crisis from becoming a Philippine crisis.” – President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo

For the past few years, the Philippines has typically fallen under the radar of foreign investors. In a region dotted with economic superpowers such as China and India, and with a steady but modest growth rate, the Philippines has tended to be overlooked as an investment destination.

In the wake of the global economic crisis, however, things have changed – and, in the Philippines’ case, perhaps for the better. The Philippine economy’s better-than-expected performance, amid the dismal growth rates posted in the rest of the region, has had investors sitting up and taking a second look at the country that, to date, has kept a low profile. Dr. Victor Fung, chairman of the Paris-based International Chamber of Commerce, has called the country “the brightest spot in the region”.

“I think the Philippines is one of the economies in the region that has been relatively insulated from this tsunami,” Dr. Fung said, speaking of

the current global economic downturn. “I am very impressed with the way the Philippine economy has functioned.”

Amando M. Tetangco, Jr., Governor of the Central Bank of the Philippines (BSP) said that while the Philippines is not immune to the global economic slowdown, a flat growth, as announced by the IMF, is unlikely. There are fundamental forces in the economy that would help it to withstand global shocks and avoid a major slippage in growth. Meanwhile, international ratings agencies such as Fitch and Standard & Poor’s have affirmed a stable outlook on the country’s economic performance for the year. In a January interview, Standard & Poor’s associate director for sovereign ratings, Agost Benard, affirmed that “The Philippines actually looks less vulnerable, and its rating more stable than is the case for many other countries in the region”.

The Philippine economy remains resilient in the face of the global financial crisis. In addition to this economic resilience,

the country is gearing itself for more growth by opening up new opportunities in the Renewable Energy, Tourism, and Business Process Outsourcing (BPO) sectors. These three sectors present development prospects in areas where our partners in Singapore already have great expertise.

A key factor that could drive the country’s growth is the strength of domestic demand. Personal consumption, which accounts for more than two-thirds of the Philippine economy, has been historically firm, with private spending resilient across business cycles. The only time in the past 30 years that private consumption contracted was in 1985, when the economy underwent external debt restructuring. Structural factors are behind this underlying resilience.

The Philippines’ young and economically active population has propelled economic growth even in difficult times. Incomes are also at a level where the majority of the population has a high propensity to consume. Importantly, the recent easing

“The Philippines actually looks less vulnerable, and its rating more stable than is the case for many other countries in the region”

Agost Benard
Standard & Poor's

welcome boost to household purchasing power.

The country's export industry, remittances and outsourcing sectors, while exposed to more difficult global conditions, retain important elements that render them less vulnerable to the worldwide global economic downcycle.

First, the country's dependence on external demand is comparably smaller relative to its Asian peers. The Philippines' exports-to-GDP ratio has gone down to 29 per cent in 2008 from 49 per cent in 2000, considerably lower than those of its neighboring ASEAN economies. The share of Philippine exports (both direct and indirect) going to the United States has also dropped during the same period.

Second, the volume of remittances from overseas Filipino workers is expected to continue its upward trend, as the numbers of Filipino workers employed abroad remain steady. A New York Times report in early May 2009 cited this factor as one of the factors behind the Philippines' economic stability, noting that remittances are less vulnerable to global developments than manufactured output.

The BSP recorded over US\$16 billion in remittances in 2008, and reported a 2.7% year-on-year increase in remittances for the first quarter of 2009. This upward trend is expected to continue, based on a few key factors.

The number of displaced overseas workers as reported by the Department of Labour and Employment (DOLE) is small when compared to the stock of overseas Filipinos, estimated at close to nine million. Deployment has also continued to grow in 2009, and there has been a gradual increase in the share of workers with permanent resident status, suggesting a welcome shift from yearly contract renewals to more long-term employment.

There has also been a discernible

rise in the deployment of skilled and professional workers, suggesting a shift in the demographics of overseas Filipino workers. This is considered a positive development, as these workers tend to have more long-term work contracts and higher pay. The Philippine Overseas Employment Administration has also indicated that labour demand could remain strong in some countries given the needs in their power/energy and tourism industries.

The hiring programme for nurses and caregivers in Japan under the Japan-Philippines Economic Partnership Agreement (JPEPA), which is expected to commence soon, could open up opportunities for Filipinos in the field of health and medical care. The DOLE has also been fielding labour teams in crisis-affected host countries to help displaced Filipino workers find other work opportunities.

Third, the continued shift to high-value services alongside the increasing need to outsource non-core business activities in firms in the advanced economies are expected to propel the growth of the Philippine BPO industry in 2009. Recessionary conditions in the global economy are expected to encourage firms to outsource, as they seek to streamline costs further.

The growing success of firms that have adopted outsourcing could drive higher acceptance of such a business model. President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo, in her speech in December 2008, stated, "The global spike in the price of rice food and fuel a few months ago put tremendous pressure on Filipinos, but we responded to this challenge in a swift, measured and targeted manner. There is indeed a global economic crisis, but fortunately, through a mix of careful planning, congressional economic reforms and the hard work of many people, including Congress, we were able to prevent the global crisis from becoming a Philippine

crisis. We have also focused on building up new industries like the biofuels industry.

President Arroyo further explained: "The Biofuels Act will make our country one of the 15 most attractive destinations for biofuels investment. From 45 per cent before our administration, we have become 57 per cent self-sufficient in energy, and we aim to reach 60 per cent by 2010. We are the second largest geothermal power producer in the world. We have the highest wind potential power in the world. We also have high solar power penetration and abundant hydropower and biomass resources.... But we must continue on a path of fiscal discipline, targeted investments and targeted relief to the poor as we weather this global storm.

Indeed, the Philippine economy is poised not only to survive the global economic crisis, but to become stronger as it seeks to attract greater investments in key growth areas in the coming years.

“I am very impressed with the way the Philippine economy has functioned ... It is one of the brightest spots in the whole region.

*– Dr. Victor Fung
International Chamber
of Commerce”*

Asia's first, most comprehensive renewable energy law

By: Tony Lopez

The government finalized the implementing rules and regulations for Southeast Asia's first and most comprehensive Renewable Energy Law.

R.A. 9513 comes almost two years after President Arroyo signed the Biofuels Act, making the Philippines at the forefront of climate change legislation and renewable energy development among Asian countries.

The Renewable Energy Act of 2008 seeks to accelerate the exploration and development of bio-mass, solar, wind, hydro, geother-mal, ocean or tidal current energy and hybrid systems; increase the utilization of renewable energy, encourage renewable energy to prevent or reduce harmful emissions, and establish the infrastructure and mechanism for renewable energy development and use.

The measure, which took almost 20 years to enact, will help mitigate the adverse impact of climate change, enable the country to attain 60 percent energy self-sufficiency by 2010 and capture part of soaring renewable energy investments which in 2007 amounted to \$71 billion.

With the law, the Department of Energy hopes to generate 4,000 megawatts of renewable energy capacity in the medium term. Renewable energy (RE) refers to energy resources that have no ceiling on their use and whose renewal is relatively rapid to consider their availability over an indefinite period.

According to President Arroyo, the Philippines is the second-largest geothermal producer in the world, and has the highest wind power potential, a high solar power penetration, and abundant hydro power and biomass resources.

R.A. 9513 was expected to spur investments in the renewable energy sector because of incentives that include a seven-year exemption from income taxes; a corporate income tax of only 10 percent (instead of the present 35



Photo: World Bank Philippines

percent) after the first seven years of income tax holiday; duty-free importation of RE machinery, equipment and raw materials and parts; a 100- percent tax credit on value-added tax and customs duties on locally produced equipment; net operating loss carryover for seven years of losses in the first three years of operation; accelerated depreciation; and no tax on carbon credits generated from renewable energy sources.

The only problem is that retail users of renewable energy don't get enough incentives, except perhaps lower prices of products produced with renewable energy. For instance, importation of solar panels will be tax-free. But buyers of solar panels for home use won't get tax rebates. In America, the government refunds you part of the cost of buying and installing solar panels in your home.

Some renewable energy sources have untested viability. Take the windmills in Banguí, Ilocos Norte. They look nice. They are efficient. But its producer, Northwind Power Corp., does not make much money delivering electricity to a cooperative in the village.

RE will be good for rural communities which cannot be reached by the larger power generators and distributors. Since most rural communities are poor, RE will help alleviate poverty.

In the government's rural electrification efforts, on the other hand, renewable energy sources such as solar, micro-hydro, wind and biomass resources are seeing wide-scale use.

This article first appeared in the Opinion Section of the Manila Times, on 26 May. Reprinted with the author's permission.

“ ... the Philippines is the second-largest geothermal producer in the world, and has the highest wind power potential, a high solar power penetration, and abundant hydro power and biomass resources. ”

Today, households spend as much as 20 percent of their monthly income on electricity. Industries spend anywhere from eight percent to 15 percent of their total manufacturing on electricity. Electricity in the Philippines is the highest-priced in Asia.

Investors in RE will be given a 1.5-percent real estate tax cap on the original cost of equipment and facilities used to produce renewable energy.

The law exempts power generated by RE sources from the 12 percent value-added tax. Developers also get a rebate of 50 percent on the universal charge for providing renewable energy to far-flung or missionary areas.

Communities hosting renewable energy plants get 80 percent

of the government’s share in such projects provided their monthly electricity consumption does not exceed 100 kilowatt hours per month. “This measure will ultimately ensure a market for renewable energy, and provide a system that will allow consumers to choose green sources of energy in the long term,” said Energy Secretary Angelo Reyes.

Research by the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) and UP’s National Engineering Center estimate the country could possibly save more than \$2.9 billion from non-importation of fossil fuel by increasing the country’s renewable energy share in generating power to 41 percent.

Based on current DOE projections, renewable energy is foreseen to provide up to 40 percent of the country’s primary energy requirements over the 10-year period beginning in 2003.

Although its share will decline in relation to the total energy supply, RE is estimated to grow at an average annual rate of 2.4 percent in absolute terms. Biomass, micro-hydro, solar and wind will remain being the largest contributors to the total share of renewable energy in the energy mix with an average share of 27.5 percent.

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Investment Opportunities in the Philippines



“The Philippines is targeting 10% share of the US\$130 billion global business process outsourcing market by 2010. - Business Processing Association of the Philippines - ” CEO Oscar Sañez



BUSINESS PROCESS OUTSOURCING (BPO) *Beyond Call Centers*

The first BPO foreign investors discovered the Philippines in the mid-1980s, finding a lively local IT-market with many independent companies and a wide range of expertise. Early starters like Accenture, which started with a handful of employees in the early years, employ today thousands of people in their service center in the Philippines.

With the development of the IT-sector

and the improvement of worldwide communications, the Philippines' IT/BPO sector has grown rapidly over the last few years, becoming second after India in the global contact center and BPO business. In addition, other areas such as software development, medical & legal transcription, animation and engineering design have grown steadily and attracted investor interest.

Engineering Design has been the fastest growing segment in the past years - reflecting the shift to knowledge-intensive services. Based on a well-educated workforce with expertise in a wide range of areas - from accounting to medicine to engineering - knowledge processing outsourcing (KPO) has become an important part of all sections of the Philippine IT/BPO industry.

Service at its best ...

that's what the Philippines offers, making it a world-class off-shoring destination. For its state-of-the-art infrastructure, positive economic growth and a safe and comfortable way of living, and a highly skilled workforce with a positive work ethic, the Philippines was recognized as the Offshoring Destination of the Year (2007) by the National Outsourcing Association of the UK.

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Opportunities in BPO

- Animation
- BPO
- Contact Centre
- Engineering Design
- Medical & Legal Transcription
- Software Development

GROWING GREEN: *Investing in Renewable Energy*

The Philippines is intensifying its promotion of investments in renewable energy (RE) sources to reduce the country's dependence on costly fossil fuel, lessen its import bills and channel savings from such foregone imports to local industries and employment generation and thus help the itself cope better with the global financial crisis.

The government is pushing exploration and development of RE sources like geothermal, wind, solar, hydro and biomass and at the same time increasing the use of alternative fuels like bio-diesel, bio-ethanol, auto-LPG and compressed natural gas (CNG) in the local transport

sector, and strengthening energy efficiency and conservation programs across sectors.

As testament to this commitment to RE, the Philippines remains the second largest producer of geothermal energy in the world with installed power generation capacity of 1958 MW. This was boosted by the operation last July 2008 of three geothermal service contracts in Biliran, Leyte; Amacan, Compostela Valley and Mabini, Batangas that generate a combined capacity of 100 MW of electricity that translate to savings in the oil import bill of US\$1.8 billion.

Opportunities in Renewable Energy

Philippine Renewable Energy Potential:

- 4,531 MW from Geothermal
- 13,097 MW from Hydropower
- 76,600 MW from Wind
- 170,000 MW from Oceanic Waves
- 277 million barrels of fuel oil equivalent from Biomass
- 5.0-5.1 kwh/m2/day from Solar

SUBIC AND CLARK: *Global Logistics Hub*

The Subic-Clark Corridor is a globally competitive logistics hub linking the Philippines to strategic markets in the region. The new operational Subic Bay International Container Terminal now linked by 50km of a 4-lane expressway to the Clark (DMIA) international airport presents logistics companies the facilities of a spacious integrated sea-air complex.

Clark Freeport Zone

Aviation Complex:

- Diosdado Macapagal International Airport
- 2,400 hectare aviation complex
- Two parallel 3.2 kilometer runways
- MRO

Tourism Complex:

- 335 hectares
- IT and Manufacturing: 266 hectares

International Airlines Currently Serving

DMIA:

- Air Asia (Malaysia)

- Asiana (Korea)
- Cebu Pacific
- Tiger Airways (Singapore)

Subic Bay Freeport Zone

Maritime/Aviation Facilities:

- Subic Bay International Container Terminal
- 15 operational piers and wharves
- 18,000 ton and 1000 ton floating drydocks
- Aviation Complex: Subic Bay

International Airport
- 2.7 kilometer runway

Core Industries:

- Seaport Operations
- Airport Operations
- Shipbuilding
- Ship Repair
- Aircraft Maintenance

Locator Industries:

- Light/High Technology Manufacturing
- Tourism
- Logistics and Distribution

THE PHILIPPINES - *Paradise for Retail*

The Philippines, with its close physical proximity, growing middle class and similarities in culture and climate with Singapore, makes it a natural market for Singapore retailers. The local lifestyle and fashion industries, in particular, are active players in the economy, accounting for 15% of GNP and employing over five million people.

The vitality of the retail sector is complemented by the thriving mall culture in the Philippines. Two of the biggest players in the local market, Mall of Asia and SM Mega Mall, boast of an impressive 95-96% occupancy rate. Over 600 retail outlets operate in these malls, consisting of a diverse mix of both international and local brands.

The Philippine market has responded warmly to Singaporean brands, as local players Iora, Charles & Keith, Breadtalk, and BYSI can attest. Recently, International Enterprise (IE) Singapore organized a half-day workshop on retail opportunities in the Philippines, which provided information on retail trends and market outlook, as well as practical information on how companies can set up shop in the Philippines.

For more information on retail opportunities, contact the Philippine Trade and Investment Centre in Singapore.

1966: The Philippines establishes a Consulate in Singapore.

1969: The Philippines and Singapore establish full diplomatic relations.

Making History Together

1973: Singapore establishes an Embassy in Manila.



August 1986 - Bilateral meeting between delegations of the Government of the Republic of the Philippines and the Government of the Republic of Singapore at the Istana during the State Visit of Philippine President Corazon Aquino to Singapore



August 1986. President Aquino calls on Singapore President Wee Kim Wee at the Istana



February 1993. Philippine President Fidel V. Ramos pays a courtesy call on Singapore Prime Minister Goh Chok Tong

In 2009, the Philippines and Singapore will commemorate the 40th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between the two countries. Relations between the Philippines and Singapore are anchored on the two countries' common interests at the bilateral, regional and multilateral levels. The two countries enjoy a wide range of relations from political-security cooperation to economic to cultural cooperation, supported by a strong people to people relationship.

Relations between the two peoples started long before both countries became states. Most notably, Philippine national hero Jose Rizal passed through Singapore several times in the course of his travels, and wrote about his experiences. This interface between the national histories of the Philippines and Singapore has been ably documented, and commemorated with a marker on the Asian Civilizations Museum Green as part of Singapore's "Friends to our Shores" program.

Since then, the official and informal links between the two countries have expanded and deepened. Singapore remains the Philippines' largest trading partner in Southeast Asia. Total bilateral trade between the two countries for 2008 was valued at USD8.5 billion, making Singapore the Philippines' sixth top trading partner worldwide. The Philippines is also a key destination for Singapore investments. Major Singapore

investors in the Philippines include, among others, Keppel Corp., SingTel, Ascendas, Banyan Tree, and Ascott. Tourism exchanges between the two countries have also grown, with Singaporean tourist arrivals in the Philippines registering a 5.9% increase from January to July 2008 over the same period in 2007. Singapore is the 9th top source market for tourists in the Philippines, according to the Philippine government's visitor arrival report for 2008. It accounts for eighteen percent (18%) of the Philippines' total inbound tourist traffic.

The increasing number of Filipinos who live and work in Singapore has also bolstered bilateral relations between the two countries.

The Philippine Embassy estimates a total of about 145,000 Filipinos currently living or working in Singapore as of December 2008, a growing number of whom are employed as professionals in the service, medical, or IT sectors.

MILESTONES OF PHILIPPINE-SINGAPORE RELATIONS



October 1994: PM Goh Chok Tong and President Ramos witness the signing of an agreement establishing the Philippine-Singapore Business Council



August 2001: Philippine President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo with Singapore President S.R. Nathan during state honors at the Istana.



President Arroyo meets with Singapore Prime Minister Goh Chok Tong.



President Arroyo and PM Goh witness the signing of an MOU.



February 2007: President Arroyo welcomes President Nathan during his State Visit to the Philippines.



June 2007: President Arroyo meets with Singapore Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong on the sidelines of the World Economic Forum on East Asia 2007.



www.PhilippineTrade.org

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The Trek is On!

Philippine Art Trek III in Singapore

Philippine art has arrived in a major way in Singapore. All the major art auction houses in the city-state-- from Christie's, Sotheby's, Borobudur, Masterpiece to Larasati-- now regularly showcase the artworks of Filipino masters and emerging artists, alongside the very best of Chinese and Indonesian art. And almost every week an exhibition of Philippine art is held in the many galleries and museums in this culturally vibrant city-state.

In 2007, the Philippine Embassy in Singapore started the Philippine Art Trek, a series of art exhibits, held every year, clustered in a single month, where participating art galleries feature works by the finest Filipino visual artists.



Hernando R. Ocampo's 53-Q (Sarimanok) (1953)
Ateneo Art Gallery collection
One of the paintings to be featured at the Art Trek Exhibit at the SAM

Largest Annual Philippine Art Event in Singapore

In less than three years, Art Trek has become the largest annual event on Philippine art outside of the Philippines, and is now a regular fixture in Singapore's arts calendar as it continues to attract a growing clientele of art lovers and connoisseurs.

The Philippine Embassy has been in the forefront of promoting the

visual arts in Singapore in an effort to revive interest and expand the market for Philippine art in the region. Indeed, Art Trek has become an important platform for Filipino artists to penetrate the regional art market with Singapore serving as a vital conduit.



Fernando Zobel's Carroza (1953)
Ateneo Art Gallery collection
An iconic painting from the early years of modern art

Last year, more than 50 artists were featured in 11 exhibits that saw visitors going on a trek to the participating galleries in a month-long visual feast. In 2007, a similar number of artists joined eight successful art exhibits for Art Trek II. Among the top Singapore galleries that have partnered with the embassy for Art Trek are Galerie Joaquin, Utterly Art, Art Forum, Sunjin, Momentous, Art Space, Lukisan, Forth, A(r)trium, and SMU galleries. New galleries are expected to join Art Trek III this year.

In the Eye of Modernity: Masterworks from the Ateneo Art Gallery

Art enthusiasts will be embarking on a different kind of trek in November this year as the Philippines

and Singapore commemorate their 40th anniversary of diplomatic relations.

Every year, a major exhibition is chosen to anchor the other Art Trek exhibits. For this special year, the Ateneo Art Gallery in the Philippines has agreed to loan its famed core collection of paintings and sculptures from the 1950s and '60s as part of the Ateneo de Manila University's sesquicentennial celebration and as part of the 40th anniversary commemoration of bilateral diplomatic relations.

In the Eye of Modernity: Masterworks from the Ateneo Art Gallery will be the main exhibit of Art Trek 2009 and will showcase rarely seen masterworks from the Ateneo Art Gallery. From November 2009 to March 2010, the public can view the artworks at the Singapore Art Museum (SAM), Singapore's premier art venue.



Arturo Luz's City (1959)
Ateneo Art Gallery collection
Arturo Luz is a National Artist of the Philippines

In the Eye of Modernity promises to be the most significant exhibition of Philippine paintings in Singapore to date. Rarely exhibited in its entirety outside the Philippines, the core of the Ateneo's permanent collection was bequeathed in 1960 by renowned Spanish painter Fernando Zobel to the country's premier Jesuit university, where he had taught art history and mentored a new generation of art critics.

The seminal talents represented

in that major bequest would, over the next few decades, be heralded as the modern masters of Philippine art; and with their rise in stature came too the burgeoning importance of the collection and the museum. On exhibit will be the early works of future National Artists and pioneers of Philippine modern art, such as Cesar Legasp, H. R. Ocampo, Arturo Luz, Vicente Manansala, Fernando Zobel, Ang Kiukok, David Cortez Medalla, Galo Ocampo, Alfonso Ossorio, J. Elizalde Navarro, among others. In the 1950s and 60s, this group of artists banded together to challenge the dominant traditional school of painting led by Fernando Amorsolo and Guillermo Tolentino, and irreversibly won for modern art, wider critical and public acceptance and acclaim.

The exhibit, whose outstanding pieces have attained iconic status, will explore recurring themes and debates in Philippine and Southeast Asian art, such as the continuum/dichotomy between modern and traditional, figurative versus abstract, and the idea of national identity in art.

In the Eye of Modernity is made possible by the

partnership between the Philippine Embassy and the Ateneo Art Gallery, the National Heritage Board of Singapore, and the SAM, and will be held in conjunction with the Philippine Festival, a year-long commemoration of the 40th-year of Philippines-Singapore relations. The Festival will be highlighted by major exhibitions at the Asian Civilizations Museum, the National Museum, the Philatelic Museum, and the SAM.

An equally enthralling art exhibit on the Philippines, *Thrice Upon a Time*, will run simultaneously at the SAM. This exhibit will explore the narrative vein in Philippine art, history and culture and provide a creative look into how art tells stories and depicts the artist as a storyteller.

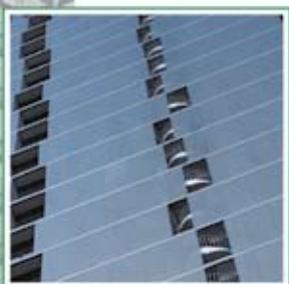
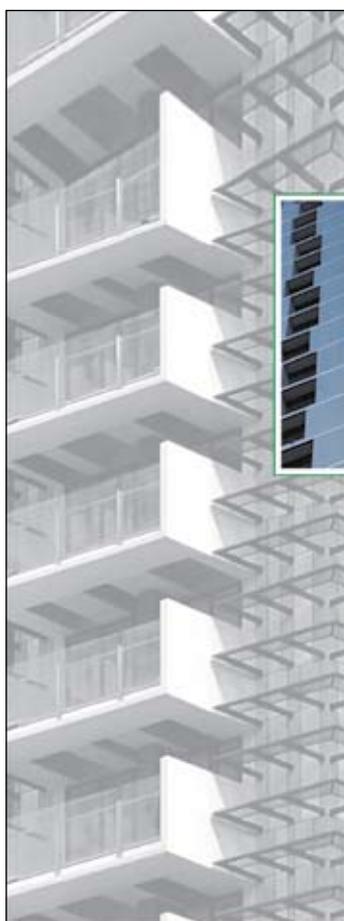
“In less than three years, Art Trek has become the largest annual event on Philippine art outside of the Philippines”

*Best Wishes to Philippines
on Your 111th year of Independence*



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Gawad Kalinga is a non-governmental, non-profit organisation based in the Philippines formed with the hope of helping the underprivileged. That means land for the landless, homes for the homeless, food for the hungry – in short, dignity and peace for every Filipino struggling with life.

Gawad Kalinga

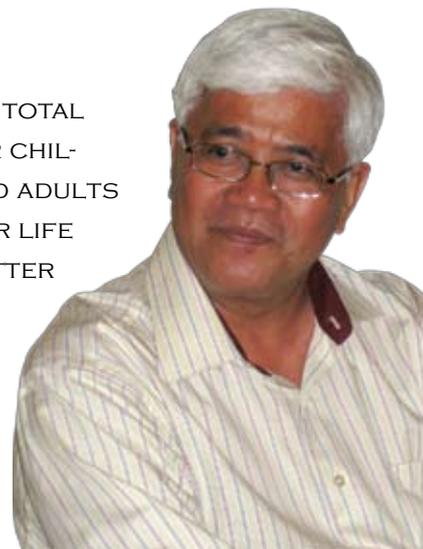
Hope in the Philippines

Gawad Kalinga's (GK) journey of hope began fourteen years ago in Bagong Silang, when members of the Couples for Christ, a Catholic lay organization, sought ways to give tangible expression for their concern for their community and desire to improve the lives of the poor.

The group sought to find answers to three questions:

1. Why are Filipinos, who are naturally gifted and hard working, poor?
2. Why do those born in slum communities have difficulty getting out of poverty?
3. Why do gentle Filipinos become criminals when brought up in slum communities?

“ IT IS TO CREATE TOTAL OPPORTUNITY FOR CHILDREN, WOMEN AND ADULTS TO ENHANCE THEIR LIFE AND CREATE A BETTER WORLD. ”



Tony Meloto, the founder of Gawad Kalinga



THE PHILIPPINE-SINGAPORE CONNECTION

This year, Gawad Kalinga is organising the Kayak of Hope, a partnership between Singaporean and Philippine civil society groups that aims to raise funds for the construction of 100 Gawad Kalinga homes in the Philippines.

Adventurer Khoo Swee Chiow, best known for his feat of being the first Singaporean to scale Mount Everest, will spearhead the trip, kayaking a pre-determined distance each day until he has traveled from the southernmost tip of the Philippines, in Sarangani, to Pagudpud in the north. A group of Filipino and Singaporean students will accompany him on his journey, underlining the project's theme, "40 Years of Friendship".

The Kayak of Hope is being organized in line with the 40th anniversary commemoration of the establishment of Philippine-Singapore relations. It will be launched both in Manila and Singapore this year in cooperation with the Singapore Embassy in Manila and the Philippine Embassy in Singapore.

The organization, initially known as Ancop, started off by offering rehabilitation programs for juvenile gang members and providing assistance and counseling to out-of-school youth. They soon realized, however, that in order for rehabilitation of youth offenders to be completely effective, they would need to transform the environment in which they lived. The organization renamed itself “Gawad Kalinga”, which means “to give care”, to reflect their goal: to find ways to build healthy, thriving communities that would encourage and sustain productive lifestyles.

Tony Meloto, founder of GK, says GK’s vision is “... to create total opportunity for children, women and adults to enhance their life and build a better world.”

GK aspires to inculcate values and a strong work ethic that will transform the community into a caring and sharing society, united in the vision of reducing poverty by together building a new nation, one village at a time.

The GK Way

In a program patterned after Habitat for Humanity’s successful model, inhabitants contribute to the building

of their own homes and communities through ‘sweat equity’, learning simple skills such as carpentry and masonry to help construct the houses that will comprise the community they will eventually live in. Gawad Kalinga has established 900 communities all over the Philippines, and has received the Ramon Magsaysay Award for Excellence in Community Leadership.

Community of Homeowners

A Gawad Kalinga community is composed of about 60 – 100 families residing in a contiguous area. The critical success factor is the organisation and empowerment of the Kapitbahayan Neighbourhood Association, where the strong values formation is translated into concrete guidelines for community living, agreed upon and lived out by every member. About thirty (30) families or 30 per cent of the population also provide the ‘tipping point’ – a united and strategic number of members that are strong enough to start a ripple effect of transformation in the larger community. Thus, the model GK community becomes an agent of change in the larger context.

“My company’s vision is ‘We change

lives’,” Mr. Meloto says. “It is so heartwarming when people across the world believe in the union and contribute in doing so.”

Community of Caretakers

A Gawad Kalinga community is also not complete without a strong community of caretakers – a team of volunteers committed to hand-hold the beneficiary community in their struggle to build their lives again. The caretaker team provides the backbone for the work of Gawad Kalinga through their sustained presence in the community and implementation of GK programmes.

Community of Volunteers & Partners

Transformation happens not just within the poor community but in the whole society as well. Gawad Kalinga mobilises partners from government, socio-civic groups, churches and parishes, media, the academia and others to provide volunteer services for the various programmes, giving individuals and groups an opportunity to live out the spirit of bayanihan – the Tagalog word for “working together to achieve a common goal”.

GAWAD KALINGA – GETTING INVOLVED

Gawad-Kalinga (GK), a well-known non-profit organization in the Philippines, is looking to establish a regional base in Singapore and expand its base of volunteers and socially responsible corporations interested to participate in community building.

GK’s vision, announced in 2003, is to build 700,000 homes in 7,000 communities in 7 years (by 2010). Today, GK is in over 900 communities all over the Philippines and in other developing countries, and expanding rapidly. One of the projects being explored by GK focuses on introducing its house-building program as a possible community service project for Singaporean students.

In line with GK’s outward thrust, Singapore, known to be a regional hub for services and tourism, has been selected as its regional base in Asia Pacific. GK recently incorporated itself as GK Hope Initiative in Singapore, and is currently working on registering as a charity.

To find out more about Gawad Kalinga and its projects, visit <http://www.gawadkalinga.org> or contact Mr. Gary Argulla at garyargulla@gmail.com.

The Bayanihan Society • a guiding *light*

By Lionel Lim



“ I do believe that through our various programmes, we can positively transform the lives of fellow *Filipinos* by equipping them with *life skills*. We are within striking distance and we have what it takes. ”

Professor Roberto Mariano, President of the Philippine Bayanihan Society (Singapore)

there is no doubt that these are bold words. Beyond the ambitious plans, however, lies a man who has the drive, courage and conviction to turn his words into reality.

With an illustrious career in academia spanning 31 years, and with a degree from the prestigious Wharton School of Economics, Professor Roberto Mariano is a well-respected figure in his area of expertise. Based in Singapore since 2001, Dr. Mariano is one of the most pre-eminent Filipinos in the local scene, currently serving as the Dean of the School of Economics and, concurrently, as Director for the Sim Kee Boon Institute for Financial Economics at the Singapore Management University (SMU).

His impressive credentials, however, are only one side of the story. Dr. Mariano, who hails from the city of

Muntinlupa in the Philippines, credits his humble background for teaching him valuable lessons in life – that there is greatness in all of us, and that external circumstances should never stand in the way of one’s life aspirations.

It is these lessons that have shaped his contributions to the Philippine Bayanihan Society in Singapore (PBSS), an organization registered with the Registry of Societies in Singapore, constituted in August 2001 to manage the Bayanihan Centre, a building donated to the Filipino community by the Singapore government as a space wherein they could conduct skills training programs.

The Centre, named after a Filipino word that means “cooperation”, has become a tangible expression of the strong friendship that underlies the Philippine-Singapore relationship.

The Bayanihan Centre provides facilities and logistical support for volunteers and community groups. The latter in turn supplies the manpower to conduct a myriad of short-term training programmes ranging from computer, nursing aid, bookkeeping, business counselling to aromatherapy and piano lessons.

As President of the Philippine Bayanihan Society (Singapore), Professor Mariano oversees the promotion of skills upgrading for about 80,000 Filipino workers. This is a huge responsibility indeed, but Professor Mariano takes it all in his stride. He believes that every effort is crucial, as it improves the overall quality of life of his fellow countrymen. Only when they are equipped with the necessary skills can they improve their own economic opportunities back home and breakthrough existing limitations.

Accounting for Non-Accountants Seminar



Ambassador H.E. Minda C. Cruz delivering her opening remarks



Prof. Mariano welcoming the participants



Ambasador Cruz emphasizes the need to conduct financial planning



Awarding of plaque of appreciation for sponsorship to PNB representative, left

The Bayanihan Centre

No less than Philippine President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo was present at the inauguration of the Bayanihan Centre eight years ago, in August 2001.

The Centre, a simple four-storey building located along Pasir Panjang Road, was the realization of a dream for the Filipino community in Singapore, which had been requesting the Singapore government's approval of the project since the mid-1990s. With the opening of the Centre, Filipinos in Singapore had a place to conduct training programs that would help their fellow workers, or kababayans, develop new skills and hone existing talents.

Since its inauguration, the Centre has expanded its course offerings to include basic and advanced computer training, training for caregivers and nursing aides, business counselling, legal secretaries' training, dressmaking, cooking and baking, cosmetology, aromatherapy, Swedish massage, and martial arts. As these courses are targeted at Filipinos employed in Singapore, classes are held in Sunday in order to accommodate their regular working schedule.

More information on the Bayanihan Centre and how to get involved in its projects may be found at its website at <http://www.bayanihan-centre.org>.

"I'm surprised that many Filipinos don't know what to do with their money," Professor Mariano says. "In these economic times, it's of utmost importance that they learn to pay themselves first."

Professor Mariano expressed his hope that more Filipinos would take up professional jobs in Singapore, saying that he views such a development as another way of strengthening the relationship between both countries.

Aside from providing skills training programmes, the Philippine Bayanihan Society (Singapore) also devotes much of its energy to projects that focus on giving back to society. This serves to raise the profile of the Philippine Bayanihan Society (Singapore) and develop greater socio-cultural awareness between Filipinos and Singaporeans.

Always coming up with new initiatives to help those in need, the Philippine Bayanihan Society (Singapore) has launched an educational grant programme to hand out scholarships to children of deserving Filipinos workers. These scholarships sponsor their children for study courses at the certificate, diploma and degree levels.

As 2009 marks the 40th year of official diplomatic ties between Philippines and Singapore, the Philippine Bayanihan Society (Singapore), in partnership with Community Chest and the Philippine Embassy, will be inviting the world famous Bayanihan National Dance Company to perform in town as part of the celebrations.





FIESTA PHILIPPINES

Losses. Economic slowdown. Recession.

With these words dominating the headlines, who doesn't dream of taking a break and getting away from it all? After a day at the office, wrestling with deadlines and targets, it helps to sit back and fantasize about something relaxing: a tropical beach with miles of white, sparkling sand, framed by a wide blue ocean; a lush green landscape with exotic wildlife; historic sites, rich with stories and mementos of the past; an urban hub with a vibrant nightlife; a country filled with carefree laughter, warm smiles, and music. Live your dreams – make it the Philippines.

Philippine Country Fair 2009

This year's Philippine Country Fair, organized by the Philippine Embassy and the Philippine Department of Tourism, is being held at the Plaza Singapura from 12-14 June. The Country Fair, themed "*Live you Dream-make it Philippines*", will showcase travel and tourism opportunities in the Philippines, Filipino food products and decorative items made of indigenous materials, and its art and culture.

The three-day fair is part of the Philippine Embassy's month-long series of activities in coordination with the celebration of their national day on 12 June. Local Filipino restaurant 7,107 Flavours contributes to the fiesta (festival) atmosphere of the Country Fair with its Philippine Cuisine Showcase featuring Filipino gourmet chef Rolando Laudico. Inspired by various regional cuisines and tickled by the restaurant's reference to the Philippines' 7,107 islands, Chef Laudico whipped up a menu consisting of 7 courses, 10 gourmet dishes and 7 pasalubong, or gifts. Visitors to the Country Fair can get their pictures taken with a jeepney, a colorful open-air minibus that serves as the Philippines' main mode of public transport, or watch live demonstrations of the traditional arts of weaving and painting of Filipino textiles and handicrafts.

Commemorating 40 Years of Philippine–Singapore Friendship

In addition to being part of the Philippine national day celebrations, this year's Country Fair is also part of the Philippine Embassy's commemorative activities for the 40th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between the Philippines and Singapore.

As neighbors and bilateral partners, the Philippines and Singapore have developed a strong partnership that is reflected in the high levels of trade, tourism, and – most importantly – people-to-people contact between the two countries. The Country Fair, as a showcase of Philippine culture and cuisine, aims to further strengthen that relationship by positioning the Philippines as a neighboring destination where Singapore residents can take time out from their hectic lives and live their dreams – whether those dreams take place on the sunny beaches of Boracay or Palawan, in the lush landscapes of Bohol, in the old battlegrounds of Intramuros and Cavite, or the trendy nightspots and shopping malls of Metro Manila.

Music and Magic: Philippine Songs and Dances

The Country Fair kicks off on the 12th of June with a formal opening ceremony, to be led by Philippine Ambassador to Singapore, Her

Excellency Minda Calaguian-Cruz, and the Guest of Honor, Singapore Tourism Board Assistant Chief Executive, Mr. Lawrence Leong Yue Kheong.

The ribbon cutting will be followed by a performance by the Bayanihan Philippine National Folk Dance Company, renowned worldwide for their vibrant interpretations of traditional Filipino dances. Founded in 1957, Bayanihan takes its name from the Filipino word, which means "working together to achieve a common goal".

The three-day program, to be hosted by Mr. Rico Hizon, BBC World News Anchor, and Ms. Obelia Cutiongco, President and Founder of Espesyal Pinoy, will serve as a showcase of some of the best Filipino talent that both the Philippines and Singapore have to offer. Ms. Pamela Wildheart and Ms. Christine Loria, both Filipinos based in Singapore, will be launching their albums during the Country Fair. Ms. Wildheart may be familiar to many Singapore residents, due to her years of experience as a radio host, media personality and a showhost at the Jurong Bird Park. Ms. Loria, on the other hand, holds two grand titles in the 2008 World Championships Of Performing Arts (WCOPA).

Cora Jacobs brings Filipino Flair to Singapore

As a complement to the music that is so intrinsic



LIVE YOUR DREAMS

to Philippine culture, the Country Fair will also feature Philippine fashion and style as interpreted by the indigenous genius, Ms. Cora Jacobs. Ms. Jacobs, who is known for showcasing the beauty of local materials such as raffia, shells, and bamboo in her handbags, has garnered years of experience in design from well-known fashion houses such as Yves St. Laurent, Christian Dior, and Givenchy.

Mutya ng Pilipinas Coronation

The highlight of the second day of the fair is the Grand Finale of the Search for Mutya ng Pilipinas in Singapore, a beauty pageant to be hosted by Filipino stage performer, RJ Rosales. Organized by the University of the Philippines Alumni Association in Singapore (UPAAS), the pageant will culminate in the selection of one lady who will represent the Filipino community in Singapore in the national Mutya ng Pilipinas pageant in Manila in July this year.

Knowledge is Power: Seminars and Martial Arts Demonstrations

Seminars and information desks will also be organized during the Country Fair. Multi-awarded photojournalist Lester Ledesma will be on hand to conduct a seminar on photography, while Attorney Aga Avellano is available for those seeking legal advice. Filipino martial art arnis de mano will also take center stage as local practitioners conduct live demonstrations of traditional fighting techniques.

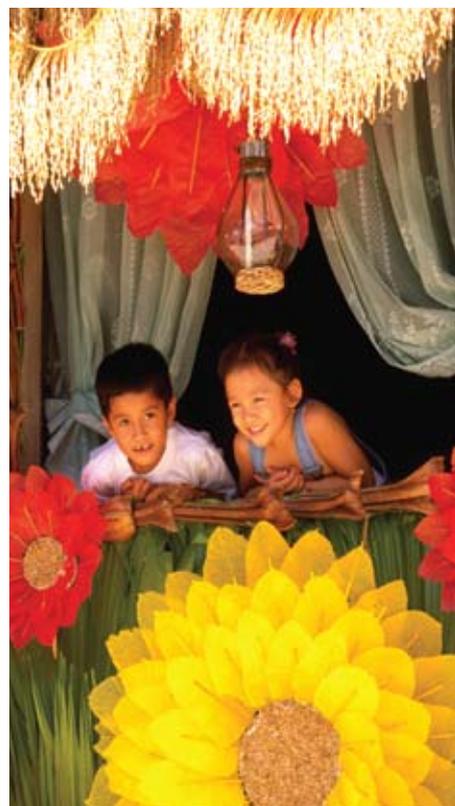
The third and last day of the Country Fair, hosted again by Mr. Rico Hizon and Ms. Obelia Cutiongco, will feature stage performances by Filipino celebrities Richard Poon, Gretchen Barretto, and Pretty Trisha, through the courtesy of The Filipino Channel (TFC). PLDT and SmartPinoy, on the other hand, team up to bring Billy Crawford, international R&B artiste, to Singapore.

Mr. Rodel Bicol, the new manager for Philippine National Bank (PNB) in Singapore, will conduct presentations on financial literacy, which will be open to the public.

Win A Prize, Live Your Dream

Raffle draws will be held throughout the three-day event, with prizes sponsored by the Philippine Department Tourism, in partnership with Plaza Singapura. The grand prize, to be drawn on the final day, is a complete tour package that includes a Philippine Airlines roundtrip ticket and free hotel accommodation in Manila. Other special airfare rates and tour packages to Manila will also be offered.

Philippine Airlines is the official partner airline of the Philippine Country Fair. Escape Magazine (Singapore) and Pinoy Village Magazine are the official media partners.



How many islands are there in the Philippine archipelago? As the local joke goes, it depends on whether the tide is high or low. The official count is 7,107 – but the Philippines claims to gain another island when the sea ebbs. Whether it's made up of 7,107 islands or 7,108, one thing is for sure – the Philippine archipelago offers numerous opportunities for you to get away from it all.

No matter how you define “utopia”, chances are you’ll find it somewhere in the Philippines.



Discover UTOPIA

BAGUIO

Situated on a plateau in the mountainous region of Cordillera, 1,400 meters above the sea, Baguio City is one of the few places in the Philippines blessed with a naturally cool climate. On average, Baguio is at least eight degrees cooler than any place in the lowlands. Due to its pleasant weather, the city, located 250 kilometers north of Manila, has been dubbed the “summer capital” of the Philippines.

Gifted with a variety of cultural, historical and scenic attractions, the city has become a tourist destination for more than its ability to “stay cool”. As early as March, tourists and locals alike can be found making the six-hour trek up the zigzagging Kennon Road toward Baguio City. The sweet scent of pine trees and fresh flowers greets you as you approach the city – a scent that is distinctly, unmistakably, Baguio.

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BANAUE

The Ifugaos, one of the oldest known mountain tribes of the province, carved the Banaue Rice Terraces from the mountain ranges centuries ago. This amazing story lies behind the site that is regarded as the eighth wonder of the world, and declared a World Heritage Site by UNESCO. Banaue's rice terraces are strikingly beautiful, the painstaking and precise craftsmanship behind their existence awe-inspiring. Rising to an altitude of about 5,000 feet above sea level and encompassing 4,000 square miles, the Banaue Rice Terraces were carved by the ancestors of the current Ifugao tribe over 2,000 years ago, using nothing more than their bare hands and crude implements. If connected end to end, the terraces would encircle half the globe – 10 times the length of the Great Wall of China! The terraces, which form a breathtaking panorama, effectively transformed the barren stone mountains of the Cordillera region into arable ledges of land where rice can grow. The car trip to Banaue from Baguio takes about 7 hours.



Banaue Rice Terraces



The Chocolate Hills, Bohol

BOHOL

Scenic, sunny Bohol seems to cast a spell on all visitors, drawing them to its shores with the wide variety of sights and experiences it offers. The oval-shaped island is fringed by white sandy beaches and sheltering coves and dotted with lazily waving palm trees, making it the picture of tropical charm. From the Chocolate Hills to the tiny, wide-eyed tarsiers; from 16th century watchtowers to Baroque Jesuit mission churches; from the Loboc River to Tagbilaran City itself, Bohol has something to offer everyone, no matter what you're looking for in a vacation. Bohol, in a nutshell, is a little bit of Cebu, Palawan and Boracay rolled into one – Cebu for its rich history and Spanish influences; Palawan for its lush flora and unusual fauna; and Boracay for its white sandy beaches and resort atmosphere. Make no mistake, however – Bohol has a unique local flavour unseen in any other part of the Philippines, shaped in no small part by the natural warmth and friendliness of the Boholanos.



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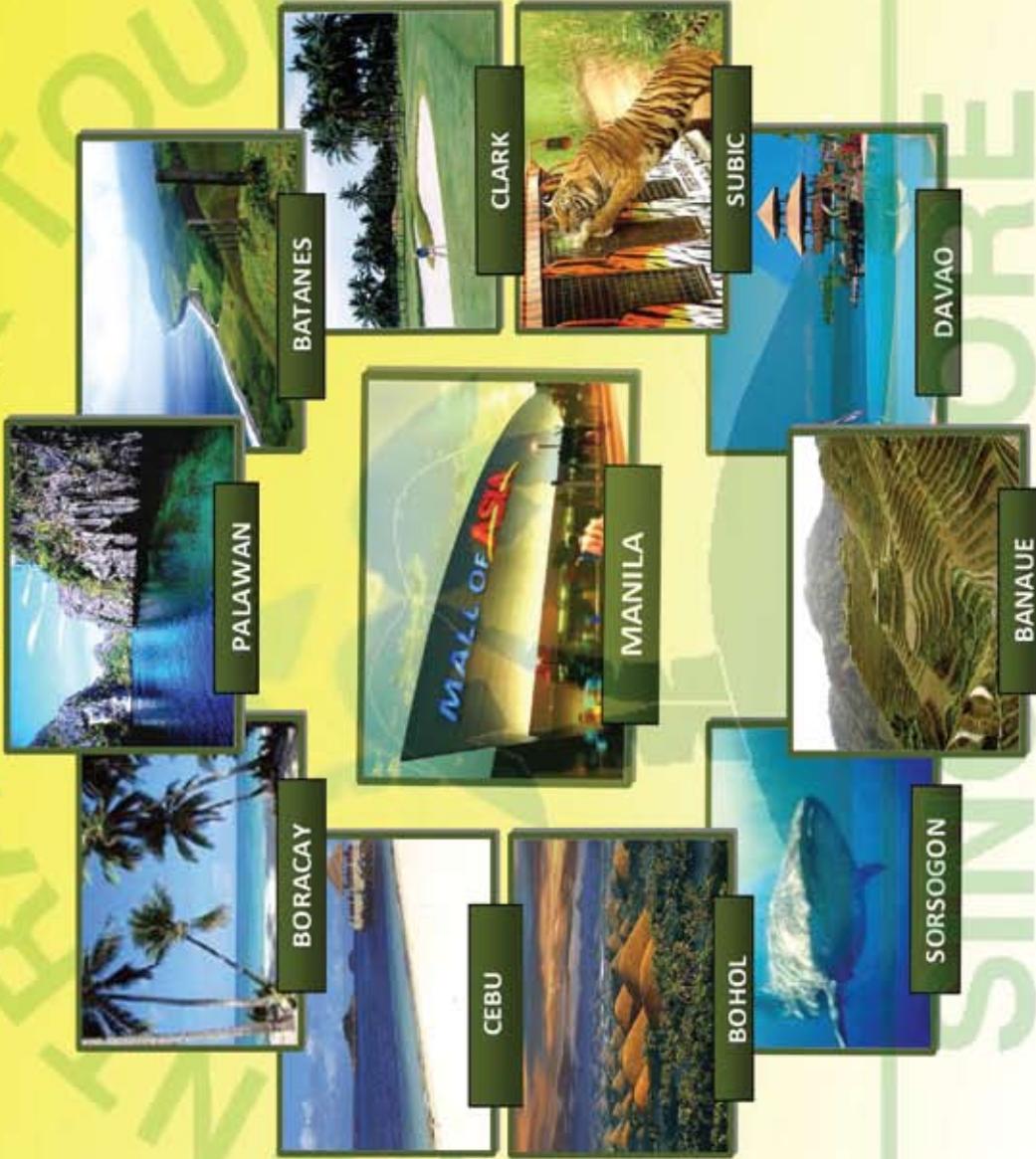
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BORACAY

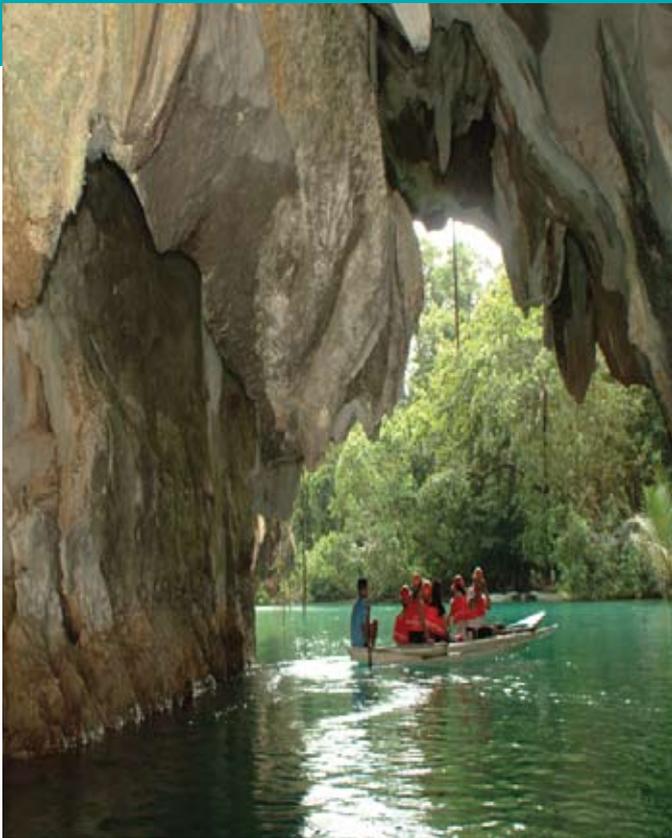
For sun-worshippers the world over, paradise goes by the name Boracay. Sheltered from fierce easterly typhoons, Boracay is located at the north-western tip of Panay, in the west Visayas region, off the Sibuyan Sea. Boracay has managed to pack its thousand-hectare space with all the elements of a tropical paradise – crystal blue waters, powder white sand, liberal doses of tropical palms and flowering plants, and a healthy marine life teeming underneath the ocean’s surface. Inter-twining trails link its small villages and lead into lush tropical jungles. The idyllic beach environment of the island is complemented by the wide variety of cuisines available – French, Australian, Belgian, German, Greek, Spanish and Thai, to name a few. The culinary fare on Boracay is as diverse as the nationalities of its visitors, reflecting the truly international appeal of this tropical destination.



Boracay Beach

PALAWAN

Palawan is made up of 1,768 islands of pristine white beaches, dramatic rock formations, secret coves and underground mysteries. An untamed land, a nature lover’s paradise and an adventurer’s dream – Palawan is all these and more, living up to its image as the “last frontier”. Declared a nature sanctuary of the world, the island province provides visitors with more than enough evidence to back up its claim. It is wrapped in a mantle of rainforests, surrounded by outstanding dive sites, studded with majestic mountains and primeval caves, and edged by shimmering beaches. The island’s topographical wonders are matched only by the amazing biodiversity present, from exotic flora and fauna to a coral shelf that abounds with a rich variety of marine life. The long, narrow strip that forms the main island, jutting out from the main archipelago in a southwesterly direction, is around 425 kilometres long and 40 kilometres at its widest point. On both sides of a backbone of tall mountain ranges, an irregular coastline is punctuated by intervals of vertical limestone cliffs and sweeping white sand.



St. Paul Subterranean River, Palawan

CEBU

As many islands that comprise the Philippine archipelago, it is no surprise that it is rich in islands that seem to be tailor-made to cater to every traveller's fantasy of a sun-drenched beach getaway. Cebu is one of these islands – balmy weather, pristine beaches, crystalline waters, and luxurious resorts with all the frills of modern living. Beneath Cebu's tropical island veneer lies a wealth of history. Cebu is best known for being the site where the Portuguese navigator Ferdinand Magellan planted the Cross of Christianity in the name of Spain in 1521. Yet long before Cebu became the Western gateway to the Orient, it was already a popular entry point among Asian merchants. Cebu has since blossomed into a choice tourist destination, with many leisure establishments taking full advantage of its strategic location, straddling major trade and tourist routes. Metropolitan Cebu, the country's second biggest metropolis, is the political, economic, educational and cultural center of the Visayas. Hotels, shopping malls, entertainment halls, casinos, and golf fairways cater to the tourist's every whim. The rest of Cebu's 166 islands and islets are fringed with beaches and sapphire-clear waters teeming with marine life, perfect for divers.

DAVAO

Endowed with a variety of picturesque landscapes, Davao's topography dazzles. Fruit plantations and orchid farms mantle volcano-fed hills and valleys. Virgin forests nurture rare wildlife. Coral islands lie on mirror-flat water. The country's highest peak is located here, where it towers magnificently over the hinterland. Just as enchanting is Davao's brilliant tapestry of multicultural harmony, woven from the diverse threads of culture that constitute its people. The contemporary fuses with the traditional in Davao, where migrant settlers from all over the country co-exist in peace with a large expatriate community and numerous ethnic tribes who continue to live as they did centuries ago.

MANILA

The Philippines is a country of 7,107 vibrant and colourful islands, all pulsating with life and teeming with flavour. Yet it is in Manila, the capital city, that the heart of the islands pulsates the strongest. Manila is a sophisticated city – the seat of the nation's power, a centre of trade and industry, a crossroads for commerce, education, entertainment, and the arts. It is an invigorating blend of some of the country's oldest and richest heritage treasures, and the most modern metropolitan features of the Philippine landscape. Despite their sleek urban edge, however, Manila and its people retain the heartfelt warmth that makes up the core of all Filipinos, regardless of their origins. Manila started as a small tribal settlement along the Pasig River before it became the seat of Spanish colonial rule in Asia during the 16th century. For over 300 years, Manila served as the center of Spanish military might in the region, and an important port in the trans-Pacific galleon trade. When the Philippines was ceded to the United States by the late 19th century, Manila's landscape changed, as the Americans set up buildings patterned after American post-colonial designs. These buildings, built side-by-side with structures that still bore the distinctive styles of the previous Spanish inhabitants, form the uniquely Spanish-American core of Manila that is now surrounded by ultramodern skyscrapers. The old beside the new, the traditional tucked away into the heart of contemporary infrastructure – these are the traits that make Manila unforgettable. A bustling megapolis of 17 cities and municipalities, and inhabited by over 12 million people, Manila is a city that has seen it all – and thrived.



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